

State praises town for saving water

But trouble may lie ahead

By John Chaffee
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DUXBURY — Two years ago, state officials threatened to curtail water use by Duxbury residents, charging that the town was routinely taking more water out of its aquifer than was allowed under a state permit.

At that time, despite opposition from the Massachusetts Audubon Society, Public Works Director Walter Tonaszuck succeeded in getting the Massachusetts Water Resources Commission to increase the town's daily limit from 1.42 million gallons to 1.85 million gallons.

In exchange, Tonaszuck pledged to impose a series of water conservation measures, including charging heavy users more and getting town meeting to grant selectmen the power to ban or restrict outside watering during the summer.

Those conservation efforts have paid off.

Last month, Peter C. Webber, chairman of the Water Resources Commission, in a letter of commendation to Tonaszuck, cited Duxbury's water conservation program as a model for other Massachusetts communities.

In 1996, Webber said, Duxbury used 26 percent less water than it did two years earlier — 1.35 million gallons per day instead of 1.82 million.

Duxbury

Over the same period, per capita water use dropped from 92 gallons a day to 83 gallons per day, Webber said.

"You accomplished this through a comprehensive program including educating your citizens about water conservation, finding and fixing leaks in the system, repairing and replacing old water meters, installing water conserving fixtures in public buildings, introducing a block rate pricing structure that rewards water conservation and passing a water restrictions bylaw for use during water emergencies," Webber wrote.

"My hope is that other towns will use Duxbury's example to make conservation and system efficiency, rather than increased withdrawals, the first step toward securing water for their community."

Tonaszuck cautioned that though the town is "going in the right direction," it may not be able to maintain its average average usage of 1.35 million gallons a day.

"We had a wet summer last year," he noted, "so that helped. If we get a dry summer this year, the daily average is bound to go up."

"And if it's really dry," he said, "I may have to ask the selectmen to impose outdoor watering restrictions."